



Written by [C. Mitchell Shaw](#) on January 10, 2017

## New Intelligence Report Fails to Prove Russia Behind DNC/Clinton Campaign Leaks

On Friday, the intelligence community followed up on a previous report by issuing “a declassified version of a highly classified assessment that has been provided to the President and to recipients approved by the President.” The new report — entitled “Assessing Russian Activities and Intentions in Recent US Elections” — makes the same bold claims as (and offers no more proof than) the previous Joint Analysis Report (JAR) by DHS and the FBI released in late December.



The new [report](#) is a product of the CIA, FBI, and NSA, and runs 25 pages in all. Of those 25 pages, the first 10 are an introduction containing “background” in the form of various disclaimers and a Cliff’s Notes version of the assessment. Under the heading “Key Judgments,” the introduction states:

**We assess Russian President Vladimir Putin ordered an influence campaign in 2016 aimed at the US presidential election. Russia’s goals were to undermine public faith in the US democratic process, denigrate Secretary Clinton, and harm her electability and potential presidency. We further assess Putin and the Russian Government developed a clear preference for President-elect Trump.** [Boldface in original.]

The report then lists the following bullet points in “support” of that assessment:

- **We also assess Putin and the Russian Government aspired to help President-elect Trump’s election chances when possible by discrediting Secretary Clinton and publicly contrasting her unfavorably to him.** All three agencies agree with this judgment. CIA and FBI have high confidence in this judgment; NSA has moderate confidence. [Boldface in original.]
- Moscow’s approach evolved over the course of the campaign based on Russia’s understanding of the electoral prospects of the two main candidates. When it appeared to Moscow that Secretary Clinton was likely to win the election, the Russian influence campaign began to focus more on undermining her future presidency.
- Further information has come to light since Election Day that, when combined with Russian behavior since early November 2016, increases our confidence in our assessments of Russian motivations and goals.

But what evidence — what *proof* — does the report offer? The first answer to that comes in the disclaimer listed at the top all 25 pages of the body of the report:

This report is a declassified version of a highly classified assessment; its conclusions are identical to those in the highly classified assessment but this version does not include the full supporting information on key elements of the influence campaign.

In other words, the reader is expected to trust the assesment without seeing the evidence.



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The second answer to the question, “Where’s the proof?” comes in the first part of the introduction. Under the heading “The Analytic Process,” the introduction states (in seven bullet points) that the process by which the intelligence community arrived at its assessment is *subjective*. Peppered with language such as, “difficult to achieve,” “analysts’ judgments and assumptions,” and “uncertainties associated with major judgments,” the segment on “The Analytic Process” does not exactly instill confidence. In fact, it concludes with the following two bullet points:

- Some analytic judgments are based directly on collected information; others rest on previous judgments, which serve as building blocks in rigorous analysis. In either type of judgment, the tradecraft standards outlined above ensure that analysts have an appropriate basis for the judgment.
- Intelligence Community judgments often include two important elements: judgments of how likely it is that something has happened or will happen (using terms such as “likely” or “unlikely”) and confidence levels in those judgments (low, moderate, and high) that refer to the evidentiary basis, logic and reasoning, and precedents that underpin the judgments.

All of which may be fine and good when dealing with a body of men and women who have shown that their “judgment” and “analytic process” can be trusted. *But this is not that.* Instead, the American people are being asked to accept — on *faith* — the assessment that “Russian President Vladimir Putin ordered an influence campaign in 2016 aimed at the US presidential election” to “undermine public faith in the US democratic process, denigrate Secretary Clinton, and harm her electability and potential presidency” and bring about the election of Donald Trump.

Before swallowing that jagged little pill, the mindful American would do well to reflect on a previous assessment made by the intelligence community in “high confidence.” That assessment was that Saddam Hussein was amassing weapons of mass destruction that he would “likely” use against American interests. That assessment took America to war with Iraq and cost this nation thousands of lives, billions of dollars, and much of what was left of our credibility. It also helped create the climate from which sprang ISIS/ISIL.

Step out on faith and trust the “judgment” and “analytic process” of that community again without clear proof? To quote the old saying, “Fool me once, shame on you; fool me twice, shame on me.”

But just for the record, what is it that the assessment claims Russia did to influence the election by undermining public faith in the U.S. democratic process, denigrating Secretary Clinton, and harming her electability and potential presidency?

The body of the report claims, “When it appeared to Moscow that Secretary Clinton was likely to win the election, the Russian influence campaign then focused on undermining her expected presidency” and that the method of accomplishing that goal was “a Russian messaging strategy that blends covert intelligence operations — such as cyber activity — with overt efforts by Russian Government agencies, state-funded media, third-party intermediaries, and paid social media users or ‘trolls.’”

In essence, the report claims that the Putin-directed Russian campaign sought to discredit and denigrate Hillary Clinton by hacking servers belonging to the DNC and Clinton campaign and then leaking damning documents and e-mails via WikiLeaks and other Internet media outlets. Russia is further accused of using its state-sponsored RT (formerly known as Russia Today) to report on Clinton in an unfavorable light. In fact, the intelligence community has such heartburn with RT that nearly a third of the report is dedicated to proving that RT is little more than a propaganda tool of the Kremlin.



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Given, that is true. It's also a well-established fact.

That the intelligence community would spend so much of the report proving what does not need to be proved (that RT is a propaganda machine) only makes sense in light of the principle of misdirection. The report is overweighted with proving what everyone already knows while it *fails* to prove what it sets out to prove.

Of course, left completely out of the analysis is the salient fact that the leaked data and news reports of corruption and double-dealing which were so “denigrating” to Clinton and served to both “discredit” her and “harm her electability and potential presidency” were all true. If there had not been any corruption to uncover, the leaked data and unfavorable reporting could not have done Clinton or the DNC any harm whatsoever. As stated above, RT is a propaganda machine; but in this case, the propaganda had the truth on its side.

As an example, the report states that RT news coverage “consistently cast President-elect Trump as the target of unfair coverage from traditional US media outlets that they claimed were subservient to a corrupt political establishment.” For that matter, so did *The New American*. Why? Because it was demonstrably true.

The other two-thirds of the report reads like the liberal mainstream media. It vacillates between claims that Russia moved heaven and earth to sway the election results and claims that the intelligence community did not even attempt to determine whether Russia was successful in doing so. The report states:

We did not make an assessment of the impact that Russian activities had on the outcome of the 2016 election. The US Intelligence Community is charged with monitoring and assessing the intentions, capabilities, and actions of foreign actors; it does not analyze US political processes or US public opinion.

Differentiating itself in at least one way from the liberal mainstream media, the report admits that “Russian actors” “were not involved in vote tallying.” If that were widely reported, it might finally put to rest the myth that has caused [50 percent of those polled](#) who say they voted for Clinton to believe that “Russia tampered with vote tallies in order to get Donald Trump elected president.”

Considering the American propaganda machine that is the liberal mainstream media, the reporting will ignore that little tidbit while focusing on claims that the report proves what it does not.

For the record, *if* it could be proved that Russia interfered (or attempted to interfere) with the election, it would be reasonable take action, as Trump’s incoming chief of staff, Reince Priebus, said on Sunday. If this report is indicative of the evidence, though, proof is sadly lacking.



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